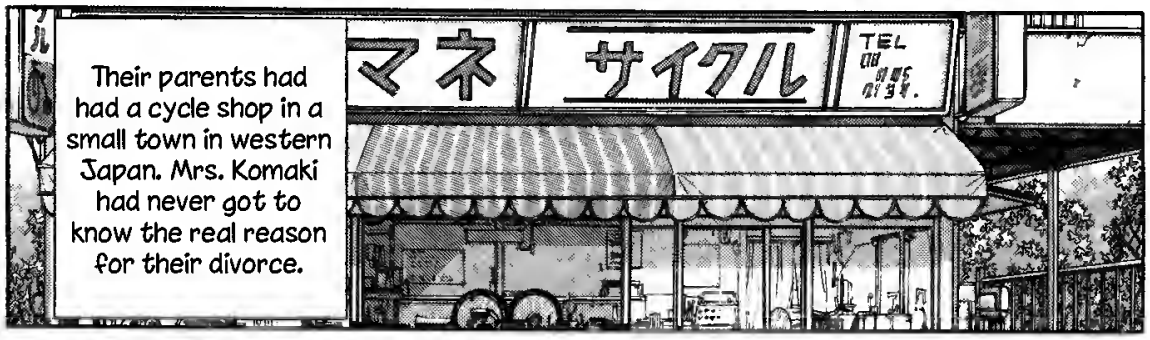
The Umbrella

Bye, mommy!
Be careful in crossing the street.
Yes!
Yes!
Mrs. Komaki's younger brother was going to visit her later that morning; they had not met for twelve years.
You got to go, too, right?
Right...
Rattle
FSSSSH

Twelve years...
After that long a time it hasn't been easy, even for siblings.
Yeah. I think he's turned thirty already...
And it seems like he's got two children, too...
Fssssh
You're gonna turn thirty-three this year yourself!
Can you please make him stay till I return?
I'd love to have a drink with him.
He's my brother-in-law after all.
Give him my regards and tell him to take his time.
Okay?
Yeah...
Mrs. Komaki's husband wanted to finally meet his brother-in-law.

Twenty-five years ago...
...she was aged eight, her brother five.


Their parents had had a cycle shop in a small town in western Japan. Mrs. Komaki had never got to know the real reason for their divorce.
マネ
サイクル

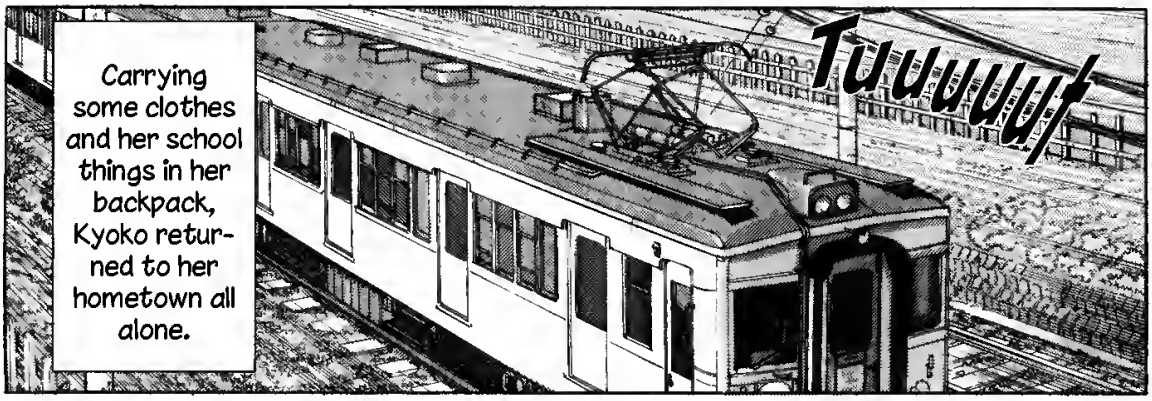
They had probably made some kind of deal; anyway, Mrs. Komaki and her mother moved back to her grandparents' house in another city. Her little brother stayed with his father.

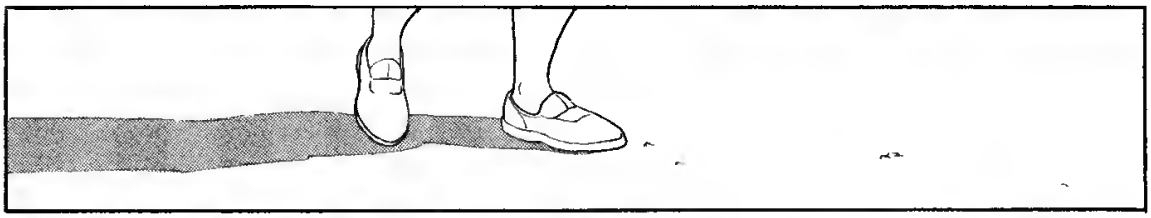
You shouldn't wake him up.
Come on, let's go.

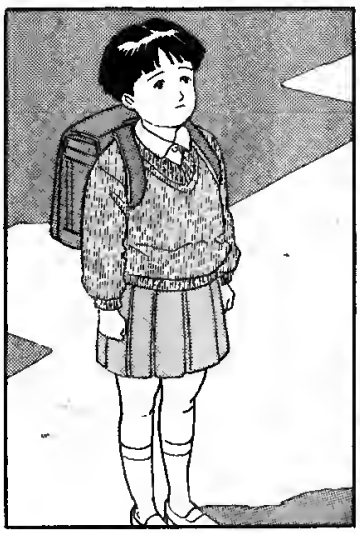
Pitying her brother, who had to grow up without his mother, Mrs. Komaki blamed herself again and again.
You're so mean, mommy.
Shinichi...
...would've definitely preferred staying with us...
I'd have felt better taking him along, too, but...
Poor little...
...Shin.
That's what your father and I decided.
It can't be helped.
He'll be much happier staying with his dad.
Shinichi will have to take over the shop one day.
Believe me, it's for the best.
...

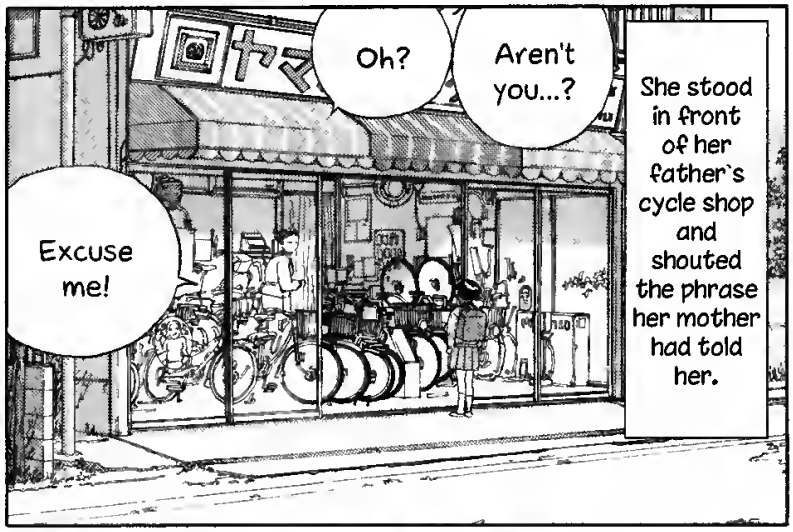
At night...
...Kyoko would often stay up sobbing, thinking about her brother suffering from loneliness.
Uuh...
Kyoko probably pitied her little brother so extremely, because she didn't have any other siblings.
Uuh...
Uuh...
There's no need to worry.
F-wap
His new mommy's surely going to take good care of him.
The mother didn't seem to pity Shinichi as much as the sister.

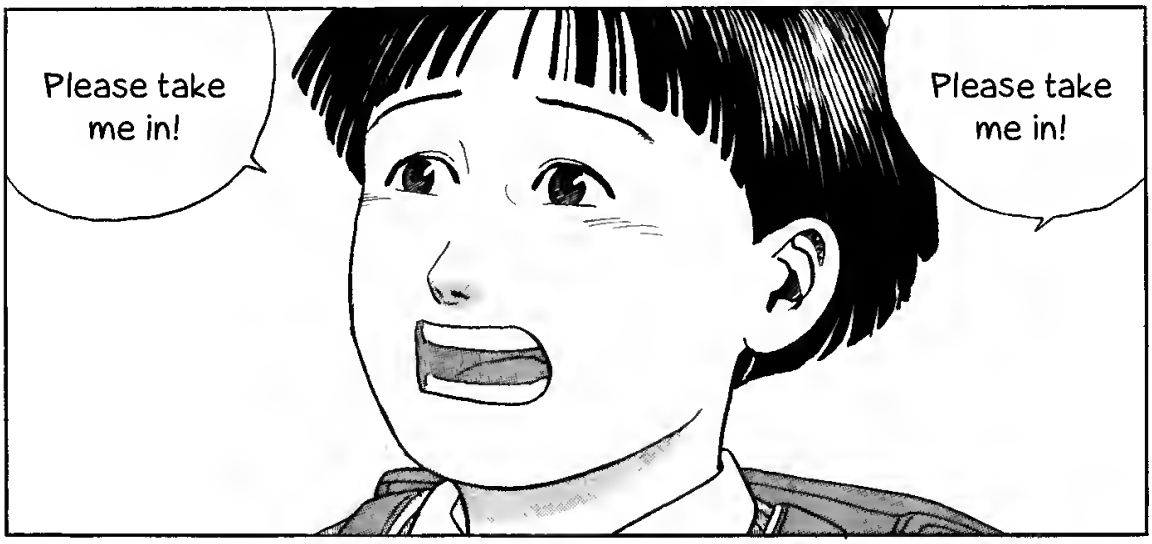
Three years later...
...in the spring of the year Kyoko turned eleven...
Oh?
...her mother married again.
You'll live at your daddy's place from now on.
But... why?
We'll have to move out of this house.
I'll go with you.
This was totally unexpected.
Impossible.
You'll move back to your daddy's. It's better that way.
Kyoko's belongings had already been packed, her father's address pasted on the boxes.


Carrying some clothes and her school things in her backpack, Kyoko returned to her hometown all alone.
Tuuuuut

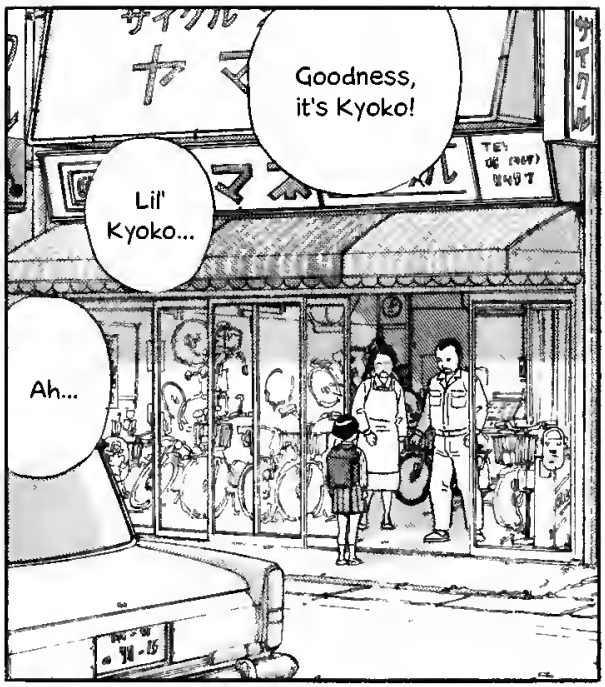


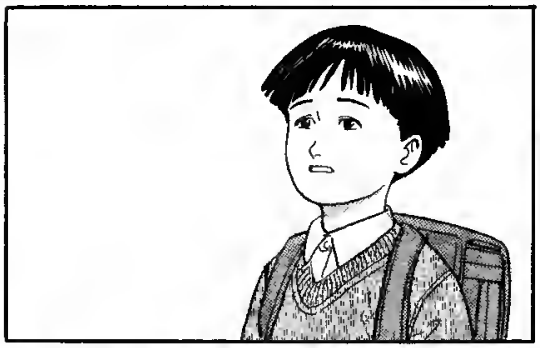


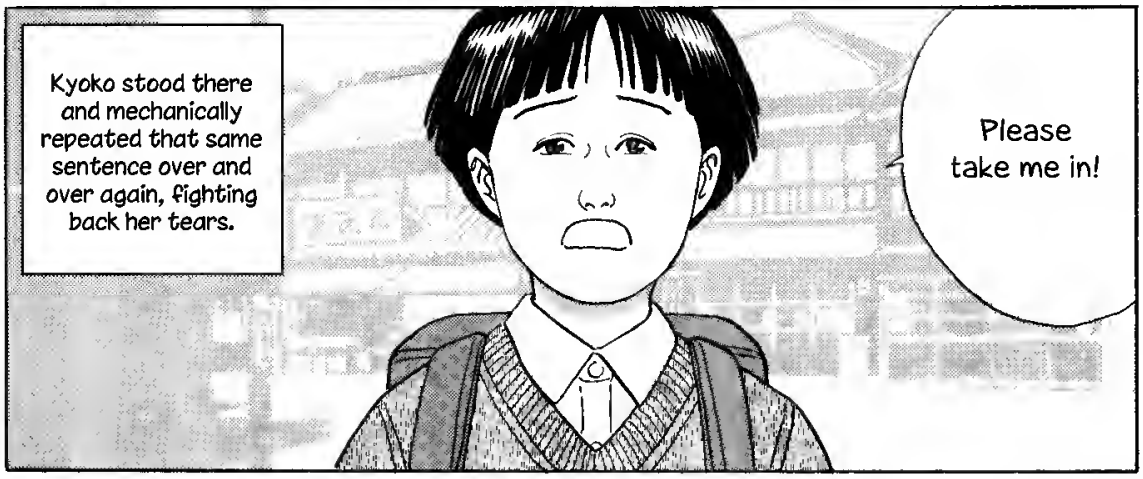

Oh?
Aren't you...?
Excuse me!
She stood in front of her father's cycle shop and shouted the phrase her mother had told her.

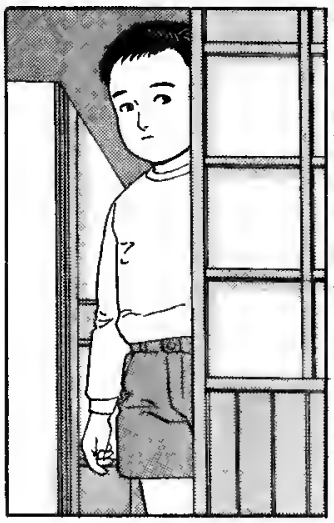

Please take me in!
Please take me in!

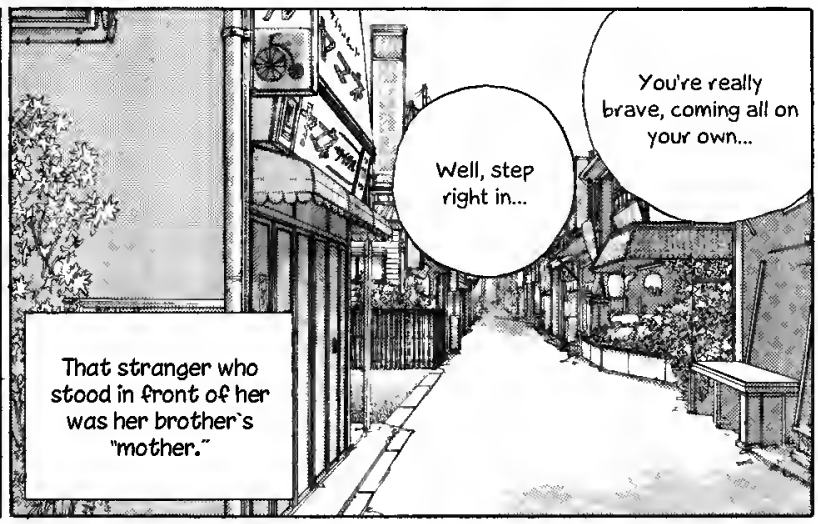
Darling!
Come here, please!


Goodness, it's Kyoko!
Lil' Kyoko...
Ah...



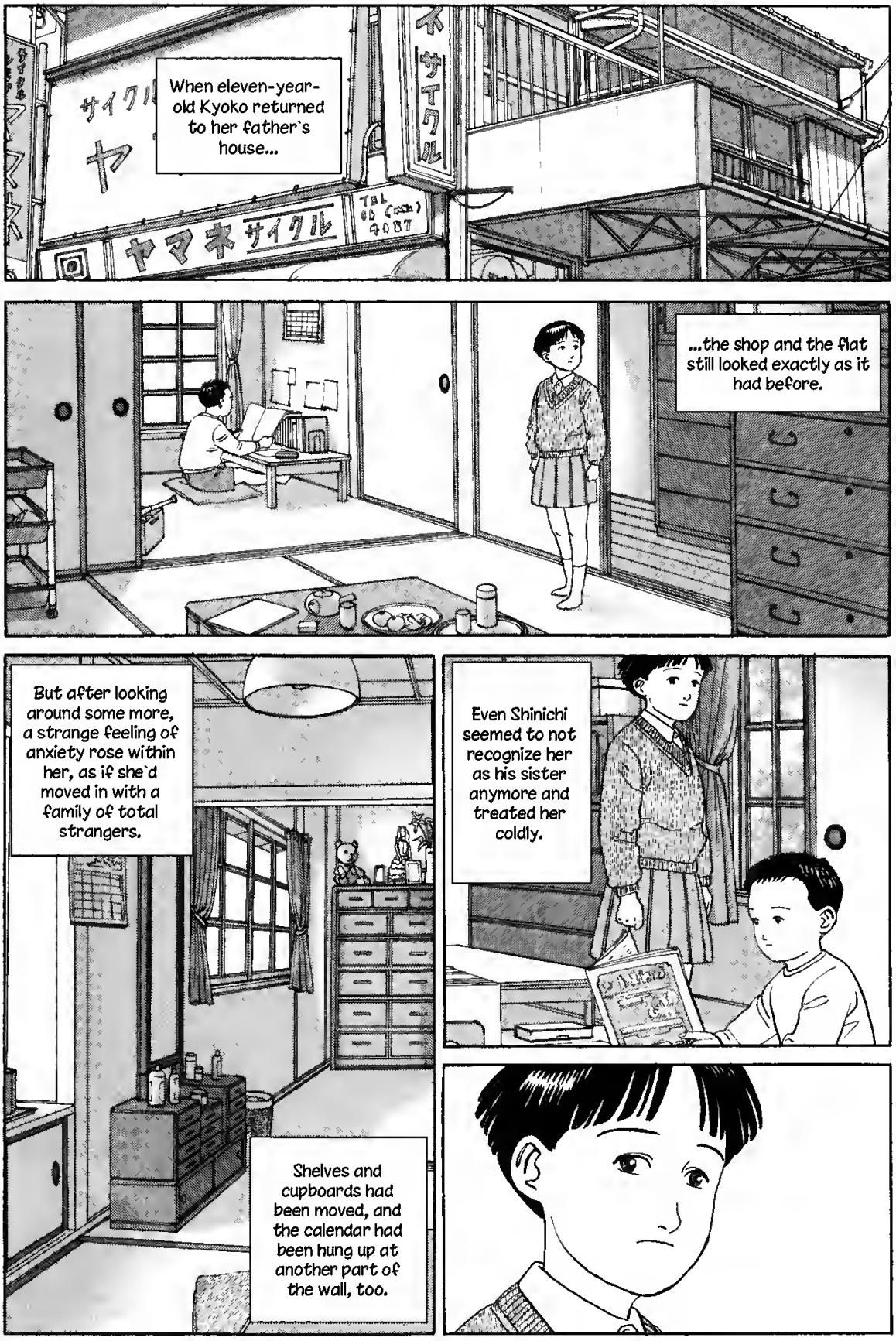

Kyoko stood there and mechanically repeated that same sentence over and over again, fighting back her tears.
Please take me in!




That stranger who stood in front of her was her brother's "mother."
Well, step right in...
You're really brave, coming all on your own...

DRRRRRRRRR
DRRRRR
Hello?
Err... is that you, sis?
Yes.
Twelve years had gone by since she had last heard her brother's voice.
During that time, he had not made any contact, aside from the post-cards he sent every new year's eve.
I've just arrived at Tokyo.
Her brother had announced this visit in a letter, too.
When their father died six years ago, he sent a telegram. Back then, Mrs. Komaki was heavily pregnant with her second child, and couldn't attend the funeral.

Hey, could you pick me up at the Shinjuku train station?
No, I can't, at least not right now.
Didn't I send you a message to come over directly?
I haven't done my hair yet.
And that'd take much too long, anyway.
Ah, okay... So I'll just come over now.
Yeah, do so, and please don't be angry with me. Call me again if you're at the local station.
Then I'll tell you how to find the apartment.
Okay.
All right.
What now, you were the one that suggested us meeting up, weren't you?
Mrs. Komaki could more or less predict what made her brother want to meet her.
Six years after their father had passed away, it was about time to decide on the inheritance.


When eleven-year-old Kyoko returned to her father's house...
ヤマネサイクル
...the shop and the flat still looked exactly as it had before.
But after looking around some more, a strange feeling of anxiety rose within her, as if she'd moved in with a family of total strangers.
Shelves and cupboards had been moved, and the calendar had been hung up at another part of the wall, too.
Even Shinichi seemed to not recognize her as his sister anymore and treated her coldly.

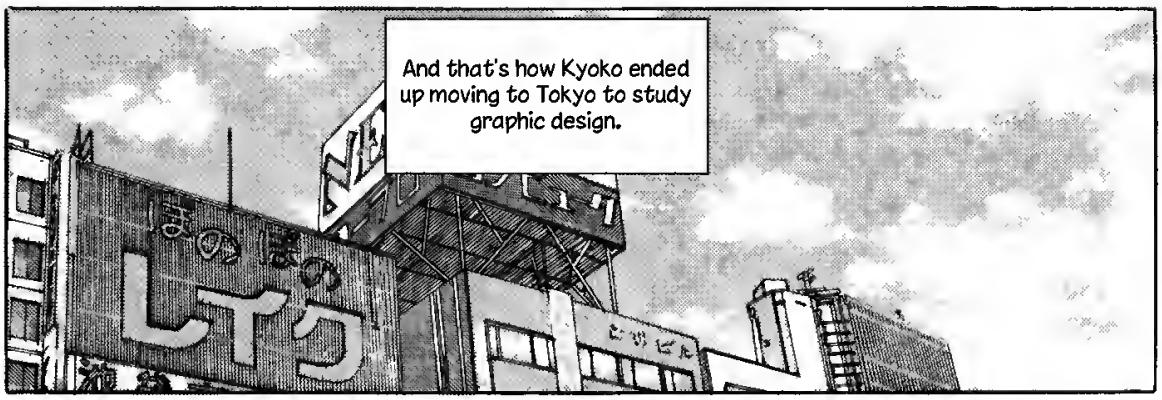
Her brather was still a spoiled, yaung bay.
He cauldn't sleep alane.
Whenever he did not like his meal, he got sulky.
But I hate fish.
I want my curry.
He had not changed a bit over the last three years.
Don't worry. I'll cook some tommorrow.
But I want it now!
...
But Shinichi really clung ta his new "mather".
Maybe mare than he had dane with his biological mother. At least it seemed ta be that way ta Kyaka.

One day...
Tell me, have you completely forgotten about your real mother?
'Cause this woman spoils you so much?
Dumbass!
This woman is my mother!
...
Anyway...
...why don't you just go back to your real mother?
It didn't happen often that Shinichi, who was usually more of a whiny kind, answered that sharply.
BONK
The new "mother" coddled Kyoko's brother.
She tried to answer Shinichi's selfishness and overdone attachment by showing affection, perhaps because she had not been blessed with her own child.
To Kyoko, and even more so to strangers, the two of them looked as if they were really mother and son.

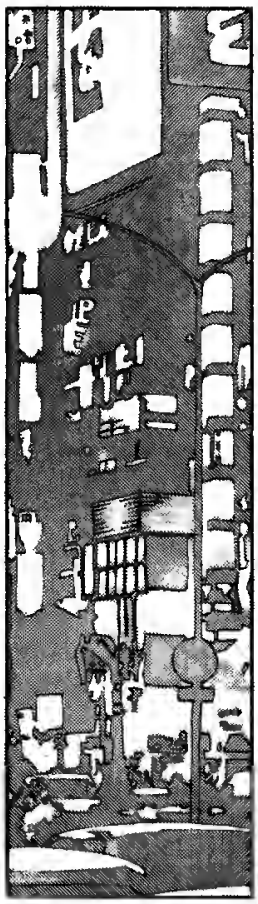
But Kyoko couldn't behave like her brother.
The reason was probably just that she had stayed with their biological mother for much longer than her brother.
She just couldn't develop a relationship as intimate to her new "mother."
When she started middle school...
...and later on, high school, she became more and more aware of it.
Good evening!
Kyoko's mother having abandoned her just complicated things even more, and literally caused an aversion for her new "mother."
Her new "mother" being rather plump compared to her biological mother, disgusted Kyoko.

Her father spent the entire day working.
Hello.
Good evening.
He did not seem to really care about his daughter's feelings.
He had turned into a somewhat avid businessman. By the time Kyoko graduated from high school, he had expanded his shop's range of goods and sold motorcycles, too.
To get rid of the bottled-up antipathies against new "mother"...
...Kyoko had dreamt of moving out and living by herself ever since she returned.

So, what are you gonna do in Tokyo?
There are enough jobs available over here!
And I can't imagine you being a talented artist.
But I wanna go to Tokyo...
...absolutely!!
Skip it! Tokyo is not a good place for a single woman.
Then I'll just forget about the apprenticeship.
What?!
I'll work at that new nightclub!
Please stop talking nonsense!
I won't accept that!
...
But I damn wanna move to Tokyo!!
Her father and "mother" clearly disapproved Kyoko's plans, but after some threats she had finally managed to push through.


And that's how Kyoko ended up moving to Tokyo to study graphic design.

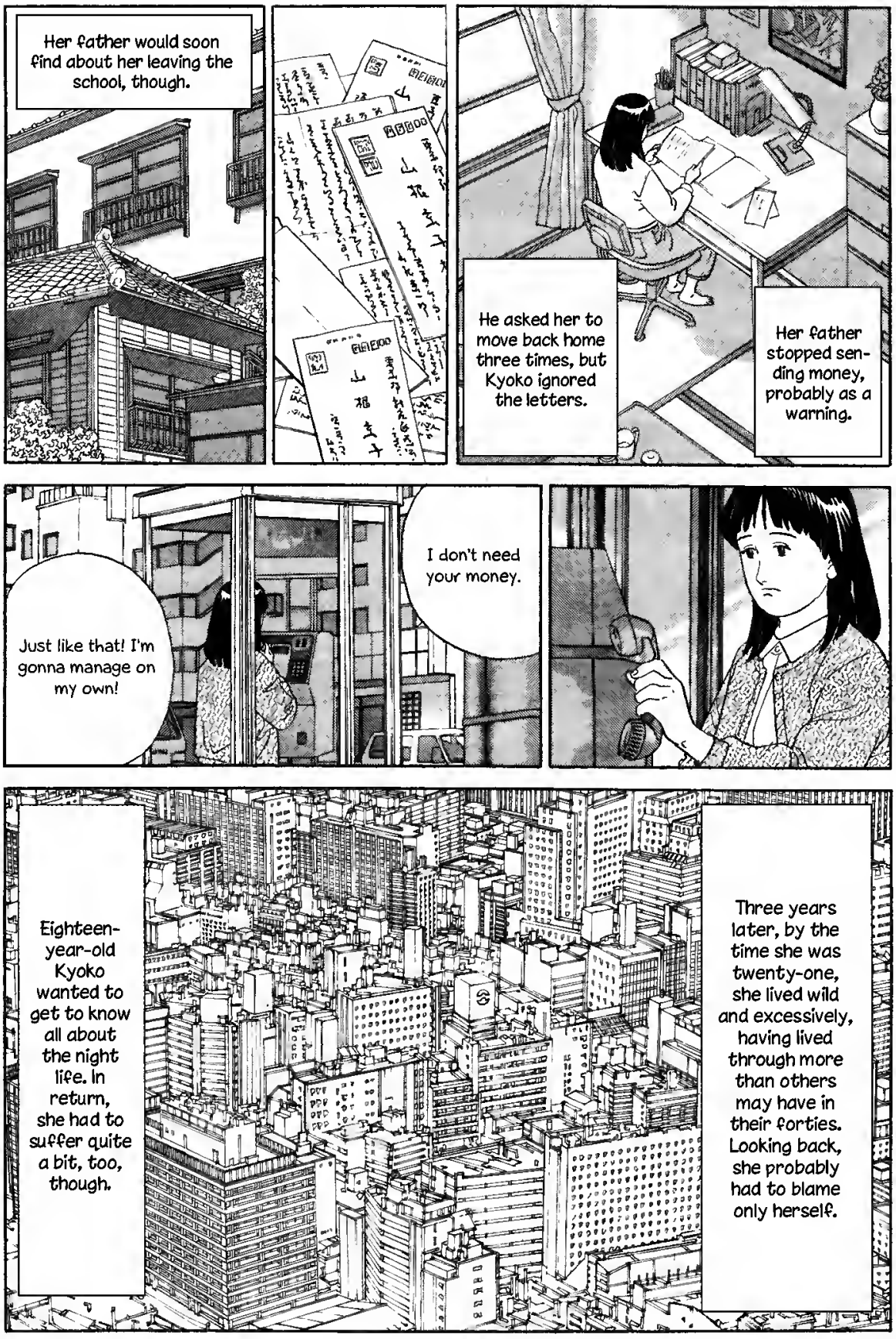
"Finally! I'm free! From now on I'm gonna do whatever I feel like!" - Kyoko had made her dream come true.
The apprenticeship was barely more than a blind; after half a year she dropped out of school.



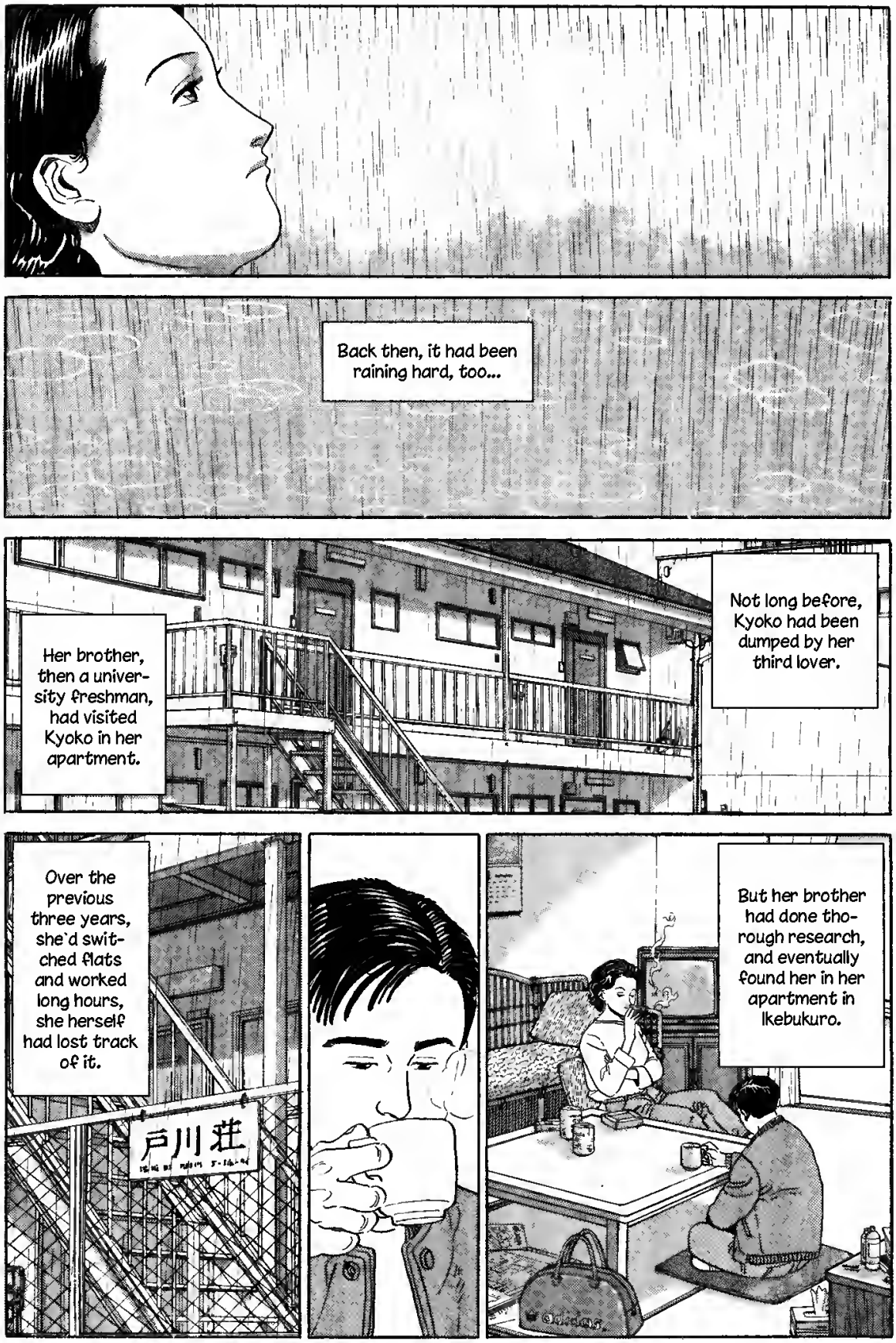
She felt like her job as a hostess at some nightclub, that she had originally just picked up out of curiousity, actually really suited her well.

Ha ha ha!
Ah, no...

She enjoyed being hit on and sweet-talked to by the customers.


Her father would soon find about her leaving the school, though.
He asked her to move back home three times, but Kyoko ignored the letters.
Her father stopped sending money, probably as a warning.
I don't need your money.
Just like that! I'm gonna manage on my own!
Eighteen-year-old Kyoko wanted to get to know all about the night life. In return, she had to suffer quite a bit, too, though.
Three years later, by the time she was twenty-one, she lived wild and excessively, having lived through more than others may have in their forties. Looking back, she probably had to blame only herself.

Mrs. Komaki!
Mrs. Komaki!
It's raining!
Kyoko could hear a voice coming from the next balcony.
Thanks!
And it's been shining so brightly up till just now...
Wow, it's really pouring!
Yeah, and given this cloudiness...
...it's gonna take a while to brighten up.
The rain just grew stronger and stonger. Kyoko was reminded of her brother, who was coming over riding a train.
I just hope... he's brought an umbrella.


Back then, it had been raining hard, too...
Her brother, then a university freshman, had visited Kyoko in her apartment.
Not long before, Kyoko had been dumped by her third lover.
Over the previous three years, she'd switched flats and worked long hours, she herself had lost track of it.
戸川荘
But her brother had done thorough research, and eventually found her in her apartment in Ikebukuro.

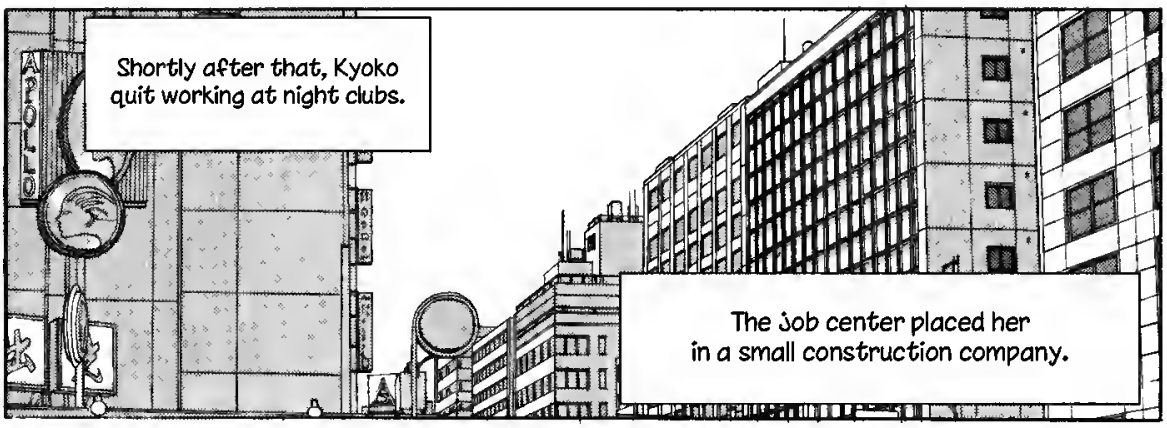
What's up? Why did you come over?
Sis...
Tell me, why do you need to live like this...
Just to oppose mom and dad?
You wouldn't understand, anyway.
Pffff...
You probably don't know it, but mom came here more than once...
...to search for you.
Dad can't just close his shop.
That's why she went to Tokyo to find you.
...
She thinks it was our fault, that it ended up like this...
Every time she returned...
...she was completely depressed, 'cause she hadn't managed to find you.
Why doesn't she just skip it; I never asked her to.

You always said I was a spoiled brat.
But aren't you much more spoiled yourself?!
...
You stayed with our real mother for much longer!
You were blessed with that luck for three years more than I was!
...
Any idea how much I had to force myself to like our new mom?
Can you imagine how I felt back then? A spoiled brat that was abandoned...
A boy, just six or seven years old...
Abandoned by his own mother...
FFSSSSSH

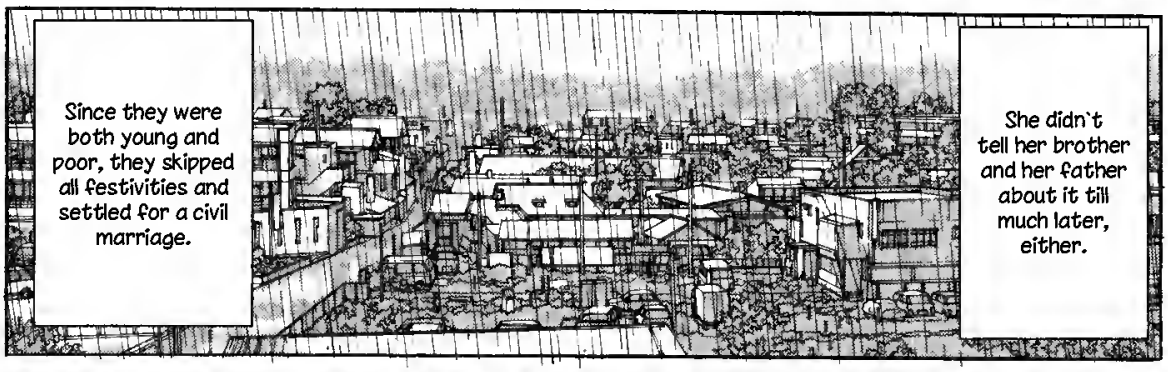
And the house started smelling like our real mother again...
And when I had finally gotten used to her, you came back all of a sudden!
...
Not caring a bit about my feelings...
"Dumbass!"
"This woman is my mom!"
FSSSSH
Kyoko fought back her tears and stared at the raindrops outside.

Fssssh
Her brother... Back then, he had shouted because he had tried to defend himself.

I'll never come back!
I don't wanna see a sister like you ever again!
Ah...
Klack
Shin...
Btamm
Wait!
Katang
Shin!
Her brother disappeared into the heavy rain.


Shortly after that, Kyoko quit working at night clubs.
APOLLO
The job center placed her in a small construction company.

Two years later, she would marry one of her co-workers.


Since they were both young and poor, they skipped all festivities and settled for a civil marriage.
She didn't tell her brother and her father about it till much later, either.

DRRRRR
RRR
Back then...
...Shin helped me to find luck in life.

DRRRRRR
DRRRRR
Yes?
I've just arrived; this rain's really bad!
Wait! I'll pick you up!
Ah, it's okay, Kyoko.
No, wait!
Once it clears up a bit, I'll get myself a cab.
I'll pick you up!
And I'll bring an umbrella!

1008 Scans

1k + 8